



# News Release

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## **STATE PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER URGES CALIFORNIANS TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS ON "WORLD AIDS DAY"**

SACRAMENTO – State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton today urged all Californians to expand and strengthen their efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS by observing Dec. 1 as World AIDS Day.

"We have made significant advances in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this country and in California," Horton said. "People with HIV are living longer, healthier lives, and advances in treatments have made living with HIV a more manageable disease for many. But we must not become complacent. We must continue our efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS and identify infected people as early as possible to help them gain access to life-saving drugs and educate them to prevent further transmission of HIV."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and his Administration have taken significant action to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including:

- Providing nearly \$300 million in the 2006-07 budget to fully fund the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and \$40 million for prevention education programs.
- Providing desperately needed emergency relief to persons with HIV/AIDS who could not obtain life-saving ADAP medications during the transition to federal Medicare prescription drug coverage.
- Expanding clean needle programs.
- Implementing a names-based reporting system to align the reporting of the disease with federal funding requirements.
- Piloting innovative strategies to improve health outcomes of HIV/AIDS patients by better serving patients' pharmaceutical needs.
- Securing a \$12 million federal grant to assist individuals with HIV/AIDS or other auto-immune disorders to obtain or retain employment and reduce dependence upon public benefits.
- Signing into law the Statewide African-American HIV/AIDS Initiative to better coordinate prevention and health care services for the African-American community.
- Urging Congress to protect California's share of HIV/AIDS funding that helps all affected Californians.

"While there is much that still needs to be done, California will continue working to ensure a comprehensive and compassionate response to HIV/AIDS," said Gov. Schwarzenegger, who proclaimed Dec. 1 as California AIDS Day. The proclamation can be viewed by logging on to <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?/proclamation/4831/>.

This year's theme for World AIDS Day, "Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise," aims to hold the world community accountable to the commitment it made to ensure a comprehensive response to the epidemic. The focus is on not only individuals, the private sector and the public, but also on government and policy makers to continue prevention efforts, reduce stigma, build health infrastructures and ensure treatment, care and respect for people living with HIV and AIDS.

In California, HIV/AIDS has claimed the lives of more than 82,000 men, women and children in the past 25 years. As of Oct. 31, 2006, California's cumulative reported AIDS cases totaled 142,796.

Worldwide, there were nearly 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS by the end of 2004; during 2005, five million people became newly infected with the virus. In the United States through 2004, an estimated 944,305 cumulative AIDS cases were diagnosed, and more than 529,000 AIDS deaths were recorded. AIDS surveillance reports from 1981 through September 30, 2006, show that the number of new HIV and AIDS cases have risen disproportionately among people of color and women.

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) continues to support partnerships forged with local health departments, community-based organizations and universities to provide resources for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, including standard and rapid HIV counseling and testing. More than 170,000 HIV tests are performed annually at publicly-funded clinics across the state.

CDHS earlier this year commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first reported cases of "unexplained illnesses," the beginning of what would later become known as the AIDS pandemic. CDHS played a significant role in the identification of HIV/AIDS in California.

For information about World AIDS Day and scheduled community events or to locate HIV testing services, contact local health departments, phone the California AIDS Hotline at (800) 367-AIDS (2437) or visit [www.AIDShotline.org](http://www.AIDShotline.org). For additional information regarding HIV/AIDS programs and services, visit the following Web sites:

- CDHS/Office of AIDS – [www.dhs.ca.gov/AIDS](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/AIDS).
- Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm).
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - [www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances](http://www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances).
- World AIDS Campaign – [www.worldaidscampaign.org](http://www.worldaidscampaign.org).